

KentuckyHistoricalSociety

Kentucky Oral History Commission
100 W. Broadway • Frankfort, KY 40601
502-564-1792 • (fax) 502-564-0475 • history.ky.gov
email: Sarah.Milligan@kv.gov

Kentucky Oral History Commission Project Grant Application FY09-01

Project Title:	<i>PHASE 2: C'mon Every Beatbox: The Beginnings of WRFL-FM, the University of Kentucky's Student-Operated Radio Station</i>
Project Director / Title:	-----
Address:	-----
City/State/Zip:	-----
Telephone:	-----
Email:	-----

Grantee (fiscal agent)	-----
Address:	-----
City/State/Zip:	-----
Telephone:	-----
Federal ID# (for nonprofit institutions)	

Other Sponsoring Organization (if applicable):	
Address:	
City/State/Zip:	
Telephone:	

Amount of Grant Request:	\$4,129.73
Project Initiation and Completion Dates:	<i>Upon approval; to be completed by March 30, 2009</i>
Anticipated Number of Interviews:	24

Signatures:		
Project Director:		Date:
Institutional Official (if applicable):		Title:

Item of Expense	Request	Matching
Travel & Subsistence:		
Central Kentucky area		264.60
Gas (3 tanks [36 gallons] @15 mi./gallon @ \$0.49/mi.)		
Atlanta (one night)	398.86	
Mileage (814 miles @ \$0.49/mi.)	72.00	
Meals (2 days @ \$36/day)		100.00
Lodging (1 night @ \$100/night)		
Western Kentucky junket (two nights)	250.88	
Mileage (512 miles @ \$0.49/mi.)	90.00	
Meals (3 days @ \$30/day)		200.00
Lodging (2 nights @ \$100/night)		
Northern Kentucky junket (one night)	102.90	
Mileage (210 miles @ \$0.49/mi.)	60.00	
Meals (2 days @ \$30/day)		100.00
Lodging (1 night @ \$100/night)		
Washington DC (two nights)	192.69	
Car rental (3 days @ \$64.23/day)	88.20	
Gas (1 tank [12 gallons] @15 mi./gallon @ \$0.49/mi.)	108.00	
Meals (3 days @ \$36/day)		200.00
Lodging (2 nights @ \$100/night)		
Airfare	362.00	
Los Angeles (two nights)		
Car rental (3 days @ \$84.79/day)	254.37	
Gas (1 tank [12 gallons] @15 mi./gallon @ \$0.49/mi.)	88.20	
Meals (3 days @ \$36/day)	108.00	
Lodging (2 nights @ \$100/night)		200.00
Airfare		
Miami FL (one night)	486.13	
Car rental (2 days @ \$66.65/day)	133.30	
Gas (1 tank [12 gallons] @15 mi./gallon @ \$0.49/mi.)	88.20	
Meals (2 days @ \$36/day)	72.00	
Lodging (1 night @ \$100/night)		100.00
Airfare	394.00	
Stipends:		
24 interviews (<i>see attached list for details</i>)	780.00	780.00
Supplies:		
Flash memory cards for digital recorder (three (3) 4GB modules @ \$48.44 each)		145.32
CD-Rs for delivering completed narratives to KOHC (100 ct. spindle)		25.00
Telephone & Postage:		
Telephone long-distance (500 minutes at \$0.05/min.)		25.00
Postage for thank-you notes (30 stamps @ \$0.42 each)		12.60
Other:		
Training/Consultation donated by the UK Nunn Center (8 hrs @ \$50/ hr.)		400.00
Consultational interviews and conversations with WRFL/UK staff, non-narrative (4 hrs)		200.00
Computer equipment (<i>Purchase price aggregated to estimated cumulative usage of 30 days</i>)		291.00
Broadcast-quality recording equipment and microphones, based on recommendations from Nunn Center for Oral History		999.00
Home office use 10 days @ \$10.70/day (<i>based on calculation from grant guidelines</i>)		100.70
Total:	\$4,129.73	\$4,143.22

Refer to the grant program guidelines for further information on how to prepare a project grant application. The application must include the following:

1. **Project Description** - Describe the project's purpose, goals, and historical significance to Kentucky. Maximum two pages. Please refer to funding criteria in the grant guidelines.

The purpose of this project is to continue to chronicle the origins of WRFL-FM, the University of Kentucky student-operated radio station. The station is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2008 and is the state's only FCC-broadcast-licensed, 24/7, "alternative"-format, student-run college radio station. (Clarification: According to John Clark, of UK's School of Journalism, the closest relative is Western Kentucky University's WWHR, which resembles WRFL, but their General Manager is a perennial *faculty/administration position* as opposed to WRFL's General Manager, which is a student position.)

Historical significance

In 1985, one of the most successful grassroots projects ever undertaken by Kentucky college students was fomenting on the University of Kentucky campus in Lexington. Built two decades ago against considerable odds, WRFL will gain an even wider audience as the station implements an approved power upgrade that will expand their signal well outside of Fayette County, to Frankfort and beyond.

The origins of this iconoclastic station represent an important snapshot of UK in the late 1980s, when a uniquely motivated collection of maverick students, faculty and administrators worked together to launch the station in 1988. WRFL has been broadcasting 24/7 ever since — *over 180,000 hours on the air and counting*.

Once on the air, the station began providing the campus and city of Lexington with a unique mixture of music, news, and cultural programming virtually unheard elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

Goals

Recap: The goals of Phase I of project were as follows: *to collect and record narratives from over two dozen of the persons who were directly involved in the creation of WRFL; to illustrate through their narratives the significance of the station both to UK and to the state of Kentucky; and to deposit — for posterity and future projects — these narratives with the Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky; and to use collected materials to develop a series of "radio shorts" for radio broadcast.*

Phase 1 interviews (I still have 2 outstanding interviews, which will be completed along with my final report to the KOHC by November 1, 2008. I understand that funding for Phase 2 of this project hinges on completion of Phase 1) led me to see **two distinct aspects** of the history of the radio station — both compelling, but somewhat independent of one-another. The Phase 1 interviews largely illuminated *the personal experiences of the original staff of the station* — those of their college experiences; their memories of operating the station at its inception; and the impact that coming together for "the project" of WRFL had on them, both at the time and in their later lives. The second aspect of significance deals with *the "pre-history" of the station*. The goals and rationale for Phase 2 are set down below:

The goals for PHASE 2 of this project are as follows: *to collect 24 additional interviews that add particular illumination to the "pre-history" of the station and to shore up a few remaining interviews that are critical in recounting the climate of UK in the mid-80s during this unique endeavor. To wit:*

1. PHASE 2 of this project focuses on the "embryonic" stage of the station's existence, a period that included remarkable interactions between students, administrators and government officials. The quest for approval and funding of the radio station is a significant topic of recollection for a host of notable professionals, many with some historical affiliation to UK — including two former Lexington mayors; Student Government presidents and senators; and college newspaper editors and advisors. Interviews with these key figures will shed significant light on the "embryonic" stage of WRFL, and the Lexington and UK communities who helped make the station possible in the late 1980s. *Several of these interviews will recount the direct role that former president Otis A. Singletary played in the station's inception, just prior to his retirement.*

A small component of Phase 2 collects a few significant narratives of the early staff and their experiences both as UK students and in the unique community of individuals that comprised the WRFL original staff. These narratives have mostly been collected in PHASE 1 of this project —

2.

the interviews included here in Phase 2 are a few remaining "pick-ups" of some critical individuals who were omitted or overlooked during PHASE 1, but referenced significantly by Phase 1 narrators. Once collected, the interviews will be deposited at the Nunn Center by March 31, 2009.

Extended goals beyond the scope of this grant are as follows:

- To develop a series of "radio shorts" to be aired on WRFL. **The station has been approved for a power upgrade**, and their increased signal will also assure that these "historical vignettes" — and oral history in general — reach a wide audience of Kentuckians,
- A historical exhibit to combine the narratives with photography and station artifacts — such as printed promotional materials, retired equipment and other items — to be staged on UK's campus and/or in a suitable community venue, such as the Lexington History Museum.

The response from the current management of WRFL and from previous station staff has been very positive where both of these plans are concerned and they have expressed their full support.

2. **Project Administration** - Detail the procedures for carrying-out the project. Include the responsibilities of project personnel. If the project includes the use of video oral history, describe the equipment being used and the responsibilities of technical personnel. (Attach vitae of project personnel, maximum of two pages each.) If administrator has not worked with the Commission in the past, please submit evidence of prior oral history experience either through work samples or previous project descriptions including any partnerships.

Phase 2 of the project will be managed and executed by Project Director _____. The interviews will be collected in a series of coordinated junkets to "areas of concentration." The areas are: *Washington, DC, Atlanta, Miami, and Los Angeles**, as well as several trips within Kentucky — with a significant portion taking place in Lexington. The project director will continue to consult extensively with UK's **Nunn Center for Oral History** to assure that the project is executed using established best practices for oral history preservation.

Note: Phase 2 of this project is being applied for with the understanding and recognition that all interviews for Phase 1 of the project must be completed and submitted per the original application to the full satisfaction of both the Kentucky Oral History Commission and the Nunn Center for Oral History. *At the time of application for Phase 2, 22 of 24 narratives have been captured, with the remaining two — and the final report — to be filed by November 1, 2008*

***A special note with regard to a trip to Los Angeles, which was a previous destination in Phase 1 of this project:** *This proposed revisit is the result of aspects of the project that were somewhat unforeseen during the first phase, namely: the 1st narrative with Theo Monroe became the actual impetus of Phase 2 of the project. Specifically, his 1st narrative introduced the facet of the little-known "embryonic" stage of the station. Interviews with three others in the Los Angeles community include Kentucky native Bradley Picklesimer a near-legendary cultural force in Lexington who operated three clubs in Lexington WITHOUT college radio and was himself the subject of a 1991 documentary film. The other two narratives are industry mavericks who will inform on the significance of WRFL in the beginning days from the perspective of the national college radio community.*

3. Interviewees (narrators) - Identify interviewees and describe their relationship to the project subject. The Commission encourages a minimum of 10 interviews per project, but will accept applications with less.

Please see attached list of interviewees

4. Storage and Dissemination - Explain where the interviews will be stored and how they will be made available to the public. All applicants are required to deposit their interviews with a suitable Kentucky repository within 90 days of completion of the grant period. Any access restrictions to be placed on the interviews must be explained and justified in this section. Any anticipated publication, exhibit, or other form of presentation based on the interviews should also be explained. For a list of suitable Kentucky repositories, please contact the Commission prior to application completion.

Upon completion, the interviews will be deposited and archived within 90 days with the University of Kentucky's **Nunn Center for Oral History**, and made available to any interested parties.

Also, upon completion of the introductory interviews and subsequent archiving, work will continue on longer-term projects, principally:

- A series of narrated "radio shorts" about the history of WRFL to be aired on the station itself. All narratives will be recorded at broadcast quality in preparation for this extrapolation. Interest has been expressed from WRFL's advisor and general manager.
- A museum or gallery exhibit to include a selection of the collected audio along with photography and other historical remnants from the station. As a professional photographer, I will be documenting these narratives in that medium, alongside the oral histories themselves.

Letters of recommendation are encouraged, up to a maximum of four.

Please see attached letters of recommendation.

For technical assistance or project-related questions, applicants are encouraged to contact the program coordinator at the Kentucky Oral History Commission: Sarah Milligan at sarah.milligan@kv.gov or 502-564-1792 ext 4434

PHASE 2 Interview List

for

C'mon Every Beatbox:

*An Oral History of the Beginnings of WRFL-FM,
the University of Kentucky's Student-Operated Radio Station*

Los Angeles CA Interviews

Peter Standish, industry analyst, record company executive

Gerard Cosloy, industry analyst, record company executive

Theo Monroe, early advocate and actualizer (2nd interview)

Bradley Pickelsimer, Lexington underground entrepreneur, agent provocateur

Miami FL Interview

John Voskuhl, Kentucky Kernel editor

Atlanta GA Interview

Mark Beaty, founder (2nd interview)

Washington DC interviews

Amy Boucher, original WRFL music staff

Robert Nedelkoff, music historian

Scott Ward, journalist, deejay

A. Bruce Lorch, station organizer, unsung contributor on many levels

Kentucky Interviews

Lexington

Scott Ferguson, 1st General Manager (2nd interview)

Scotty Baesler, former Lexington mayor

Pam Miller, former Lexington mayor

Ellen Bush, Kentucky Kernel columnist, early advocate

Kakie Urch, founder (2nd interview)

Jack Blanton, UK board member

Paula Anderson, UK media advisor

Dan Shumway, SAB Concert Committee Chair

Frank X. Walker, writer, arts advocate

Liz Caras, Kentucky Kernel editor

Northern Kentucky

John Cain, Student Government president

Western Kentucky

Cindy Weaver, Student Government president

Ken Arrington, Student Government president

Pamela Bratcher, SAB Concert Committee Chair

Education

B.A. Journalism, University of Kentucky, 1992. Areas of concentration: Radio and television production, photojournalism.

Related Work Experience

- Kentucky Oral History Commission — Project Director, May-October 2008
C'mon Every Beatbox: An Oral History of the Origins of WRFL-FM, UK's student-run radio station
- Freelance Writer, Photographer, Graphic Designer, DeeJay 2000-Present
- Kentucky Educational Television — Graphic Designer, Project Manager 2001-Present
- Kentucky Cattlemen Association — Writer, Interviewer, Photographer 2000-Present
- Smiley Pete Publications — Writer, Interviewer, Photographer 2000-Present
- WTVQ-TV — Weekend Audio Director 1992-1995
- University Of Kentucky Student Center Technical Crew — Sound & Light Coordination for Speakers, Concerts, events 1988-1991
- WRFL-FM — Founding Member and 2nd Program Director (1986 - 1992); Host of Trivial Thursdays, a weekly talk and interview show featuring Lexington's rich collection of writers, musicians, and community organizers (2001 -present). 1986-1992
2001-present

Media and Technology Field Experience

- National Geographic Television — Production coordinator/Location Scout/Grip, Lexington, KY. Winter 2002
- Dos Vatos Productions — Grip/Location Scout/Location Photographer, Oaxaca, Mexico; Juchitan, Mexico; Lexington, KY; Tucson, AZ. 2002, 2007
- Director/Director of Photography — WRFL video documentary project. Lexington, KY. (unrelated to this grant application) Winter 2008
- Ongoing series of personal multimedia chronicles of friends and family discussing their lives, past and present. ongoing

Workshops and Professional Development

- Maine Media Workshops — Developing the Narrative Story with Bill Douthitt (National Geographic Senior Editor) and Karen Kasmauski (National Geographic photographer). Rockport, ME Fall 2007
- Mountain Workshop 2007 — Western Kentucky University's by-invitation annual photojournalism and multimedia intensive. Danville, KY. Fall 2007



UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

Public Relations

*102 A Mathews Building
Lexington, KY 40506-0047
(859) 257-3303
fax (859) 257-2635
www.uky.edu*

February 27, 2008

To whom it may concern:

More than 20 years ago, a young reporter on the University of Kentucky's daily student newspaper made a provocative plea-students should band together to create an independent, student-run radio station.

The idea was-and in some ways still is-completely novel: Students funding, operating and running their own radio station. No one believed it would happen.

But the reporter-Kakie Urch, who now is a film producer in California-wasn't real keen on being told no. She formed a student group. She wrote columns. She lobbied, cajoled and threw benefit concerts. In the end, she and hundreds of students who joined her and believed in the effort-won.

Students pledged a small increase in their fees to start a makeshift station in the basement of the UK Student Center. WRFL-88.1-all the way to the left on your radio dial-was born.

Twenty years later, the station is going strong. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, the station runs the broadest and most diverse selection of music and informational programming available in Lexington, if not Kentucky. Bluegrass. Rock. Alternative. Classical. Jazz. You name it and it likely has a home on WRFL

At the same time, scores of students have received news training at WRFL. The station has been, and continues to be, the venue for strong public affairs programming and interview shows. Recently, the station broadcast live for the campus community a student forum with UK President Lee T. Todd, Jr.

To this day, WRFL remains the only independent, student-run college radio station in Kentucky. It remains provocative, a bit edgy, and committed to diverse music. After 20 years, it remains unique and iconic. It remains a living laboratory and example that student activism and involvement is not an archaic notion, but alive and well.

What else can you say all that about?

Against that backdrop, an oral history documenting the struggle to become a station, its roots and its founding 20 years ago, and its progression as a national leader in college radio would be, not only timely, but compelling as oral history. I strongly urge your consideration for support for this important project. The university already has been involved in preparation for the 20th anniversary celebration, working on a video and helping with planning for the event. We would be honored to be involved further in the development of an oral history project about the station.

_____, who is spearheading this proposed project, is a founding member of WRFL and works now as a freelance writer, photographer and graphic designer in Lexington. He has a lifelong passion for celebrating and recording the moments that surround us. He also is the host of a weekly interview/talk show on WRFL. I believe his passion and his expertise in various mediums would lead to a successful and informative oral history-

Thanks for your willingness to consider this project. I am certainly willing to provide additional information if appropriate. In the meantime, I look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your consideration of support for this effort.

Sincerely,

info withheld

2 27 08

To: Sarah Milligan, Director
Kentucky Oral History Commission

Re: Letter of support for WRFL project application

A student owned and operated radio station is an intriguing hybrid. It mixes elements of commercial broadcasting with non-commercial broadcasting, idealism with survival skills.

The question is, why? Why, with the plethora of commercial channels, the local coverage of several university owned and operated stations, and auxiliary channels like the internet, never mind TV and iPods, all competing for attention, why would students put in the time and effort to create and sustain yet another channel. A hundred or more students, I understand, volunteer to keep the station programmed and operating 24/7.

This oral history project should reveal interesting insights into the compulsive need for young people to reshape the universe in which they find themselves. They are in search of their own voice and this is one very constructive way for them to conduct that search.

I'm sure it took great ingenuity and tenacity on the part of some persuasive students to convince the administration to agree to the application for an FM license and to help them get it off the ground. That in itself is an account worth recording.

Their programming is original, unfettered, and no doubt capable of giving the university and the community heartburn on occasion. But in the process of "doing their own thing" these students are learning and growing, on their own terms and on their own initiative. They feel they have something unique to say and they want to say it in their own words and in their own way. It does us as much good to listen as it does them to speak.

An oral history of their experience should tell a story that has universal implications for the benefit not only of future student experimenters but for the adults - particularly parents and educators - who want to understand and help nurture them.

The project principal, _____, is a well qualified professional and an oral history enthusiast.

February 29, 2008

Kentucky Historical Society
Oral History Commission
100 West Broadway
Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Committee Members:

It gives me great pleasure to write on behalf of _____ application to The Kentucky Oral History Commission for a project grant to conduct interviews telling the story of the beginnings of the legendary WRFL radio. I believe this project will prove to be as innovative, funky, brave, and fun as the pioneers of this venerable and local radio station.

By way of background, _____ has been a still photographer on several of my documentary projects including the recently funded KOHC transcription project *The Spirituals*. _____ is very involved with his local community and often collaborates together with filmmakers, oral historians, writers, musicians, belly dancers, and the list goes on. _____ spent a day on the beautiful farm of the Jenkins family, located in the outskirts of Georgetown, Kentucky. We were filming one of our historical vignettes with tobacco farmer, Mr. Jenkins, working together with ancestor ghost slaves. One of _____'s haunting still photographs is now featured on the front page of our website. Importantly, _____ has deep and affectionate roots for the history of Kentucky and what this history means for all Kentuckians.

I think the WRFL radio project will be much like my KOHC funded documentary project, *The Kentucky Theatre*, in that you will hear a story not often documented, heard, or archived. It is an eclectic group of "great accomplisners" that _____ proposes to interview and they are eager to share their stories of this important and exciting time in their lives.

_____ is creative, energetic, and always seeking an interesting way to tell a good story. Having conducted many interviews myself, I know intimately the skills needed for this project and I believe _____ is more than qualified to do this. He is a wonderful conversationalist, listener, and observer. I think the interviews that _____ will create will be of great interest and importance for the state of Kentucky.

In summary, I have every confidence that _____ will create an excellent oral history project. Using interviews to celebrate what is unique and unknown about Kentucky radio culture is a wonderful idea and an interesting way to understand more about the unknown history of Kentucky.

It is for all these reasons that I recommend funding _____ with a Kentucky Oral History Commission project grant to you in the highest terms. Please feel free to call me at _____ should you have any questions or need any additional information about _____ and his interviewing abilities and potential.

Most Sincerely,



UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

March 4, 2008

Kentucky Oral History Commission
Kentucky Historical Society
100 West Broadway
Frankfort, KY 40601

School of Music

College of Fine Arts
105 Fine Arts Building
Lexington, KY 40506

Dear Kentucky Oral History Commission:

I am delighted to endorse the proposal submitted by Mr. _____ titled "C'mon Every Beatbox: The Beginnings of WRFL-FM the University of Kentucky's Student-Operated Radio Station." I am convinced that this is a significant project that is ripe for documentation; further _____ is exactly the right person to undertake this project.

The role of radio was critical in the dissemination of American culture throughout the world. Musically, in the 1930s regional pockets of distinctive musical culture were put in direct contact with one another, and consequently national popular musical styles, such as country, jazz, rhythm and blues, rock, gospel, and bluegrass arose. The medium of radio allowed us to hear one another and the crosspollination flowered in our distinctive popular culture.

Ever since we were merely a collection of colonies, we have wrestled with the American identity crisis—are we multicultural or is this a melting pot. One of the main forces for that melting pot was radio. Radio does not respect boundaries. It is not inhibited by geographical borders, it is not constrained by ethnic, gender, or class obstacles. Radio is free and radio is available to all of us. Therefore it allowed the babble of our individual voices to be heard and, in turn, it allowed us to initiate a national dialogue in a national tongue.

By 2008, however, the dynamic role of the radio has been reduced to little more than an anachronism by a host of new dissemination technologies. DSL, cable, ethernet, and satellite link us to a web that now broadcasts by podcast; we now share our music and talk via internet. The megastations relegated radio to formulaic clear channel standardization. At this nadir of radio's influence and independence, it is meet, right, proper, and our bounden duty to celebrate the distinctive individual voice of non-commercial radio. It is important that we cherish the value of an independent broadcast voice. It is essential that we recognize the role of WRFL as a special and unique voice with a past, a present, and a future in our Commonwealth. As a means for connecting a vibrant history to an uncertain future, it is time for us to document the development of that powerful little station all the way to the left...of our dial. WRFL is absolutely unique in the history of Kentucky.

_____’s proposal to create an oral history is timely. The folks that created the station are still available. In their "midlife" their memories are still distinct but the intervening time has imparted some valuable perspective. The folks that _____ seeks to interview left behind a continuing legacy. The mission created by these students twenty years ago continues to guide the station. There is diversity, there is freshness, there is an edgy excitement as students continue to learn and teach in this valuable university laboratory. The core values of freedom and independence incited by the founding

students are still nurtured by the station.

_____ is the perfect person to guide the WRFL oral history project. He was a founding member and he has remained active to the very present. He has the media skills, the technological expertise, and most importantly, the personality and sensitivity that will enable him to extract honest, informed, and insightful interviews.

To this day I vividly recall my own personal excitement as the initial discussions and planning finally flowered in the inaugural broadcast of WRFL. As a very young assistant professor of music, I thought that this was the single most important event I had witnessed at the university. The intervening years have not dimmed my view—the first broadcast of WRFL symbolized the power gained by channeling creative thought into pragmatic reality, it affirmed the transformative potential of education....and it set loose some wonderful music, news, and entertainment on our Commonwealth.

Please allow me to strongly urge consideration of _____ proposal to create an oral history of WRFL Radio. This is a station and a storied history well worth preserving. Thank you for your consideration.

Cordially,
